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IMPERIAL TIE DEFENDER

High-performance starfighter of the Imperial Remnant

X-1 Viper "Automadon"

Imperial Grand Admirals

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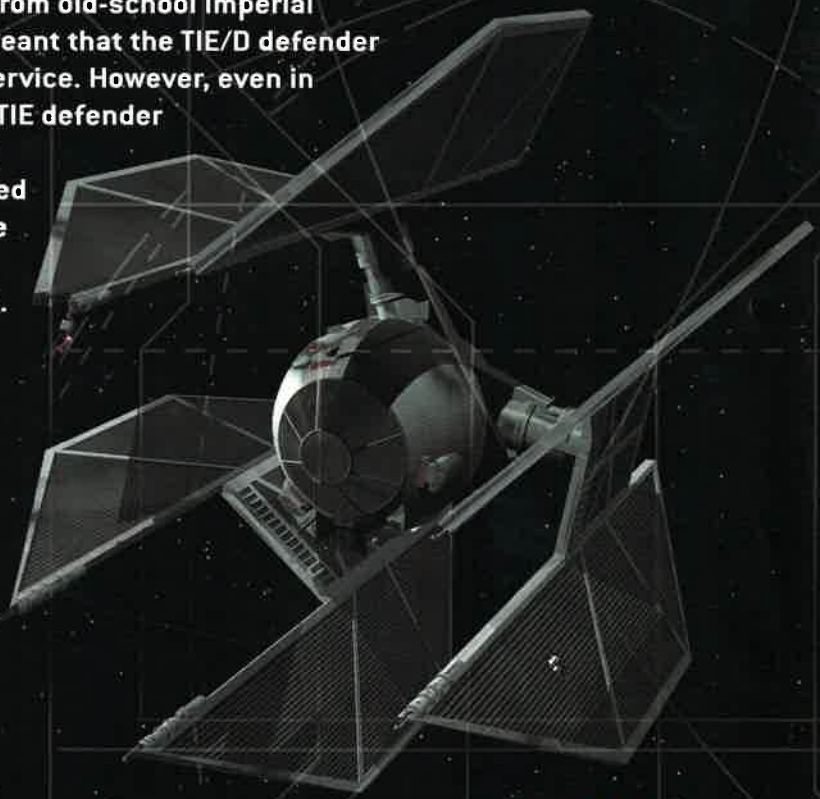
STAR WAR

The starfighter project that could have won the Galactic Civil War for the Empire was completed only just before the Battle of Endor. A coup attempt orchestrated by the project supervisor, Grand Admiral Demetrius Zaarin, the cost of the fighter, and resistance from old-school Imperial strategists all meant that the TIE/D defender never saw full service. However, even in limited use, the TIE defender proved its worth and demonstrated the lucky escape that the Rebel Alliance had had.



"WE'RE GOING TO BE TRAINED TO FLY THESE DEFENDERS, THEN WE'LL BE GIVEN A BACK DOOR INTO KRENNEL'S CAPITAL." WEDGE ANTILLES

THE TIE/D DEFENDER

IMPERIAL SUPERIORITY

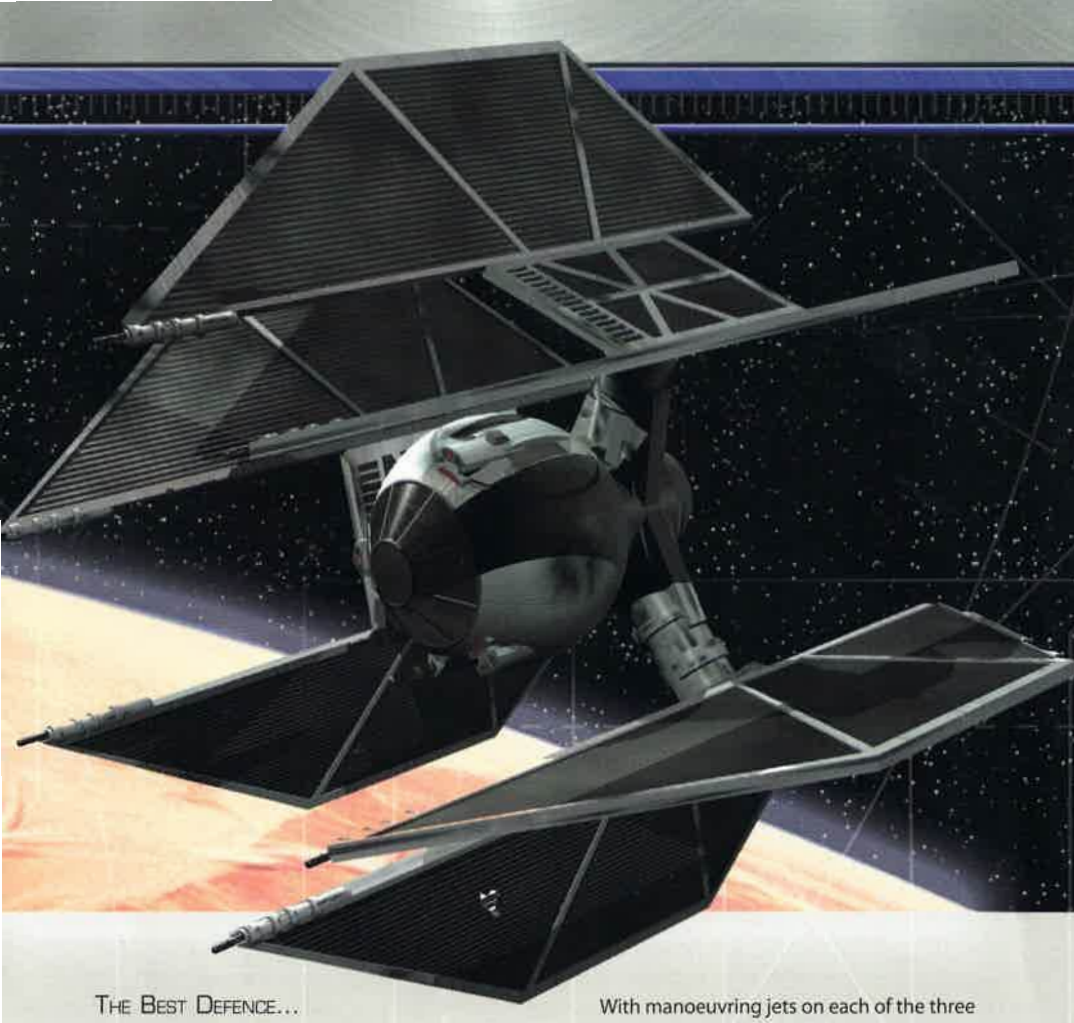
After the Battle of Yavin, the Empire was forced to reconsider its tactics in dealing with the Rebel Alliance, taking them seriously for perhaps the first time. Several special weapons projects were initiated, including the TIE advanced x7 – the TIE/D defender.

Led by the Empire's head of starfighter technology research and development, Demetrius Zaarin, the TIE advanced x7 programme was based in an XQ Platform deep space facility in the Parmel System, the same facility that developed the TIE/ad avenger. However, initial prototype development was conducted by Sienar Advanced Research on Corulag, where the earliest craft were constructed. These vessels saw action on the fringes of the Battle of Hoth. The defender project was finally completed just before the Battle of Endor.

'Trip' Blind Spot

The TIE/D defender featured the same basic flight and weapons controls as other TIE series fighters, and the ball cockpit was essentially the same. There were no life support systems aboard the fighter, so the pilot wore the standard sealed Imperial flight suit. Everything else was different. The 'wings' were the most obvious difference between the defender and every other Imperial fighter craft. There were three solar arrays, and these projected from the rear superstructure of the fighter, not from the cockpit. This aft section held the I-s4d

solar ionisation reactor that converted and stored the energy from the collection panels on the three wings. Unlike with other 'bent-wing' fighter designs, the wings on the defender were angled outward. While the triple-wing array (which led Rebel pilots to nickname the defenders 'trips') increased the power available to the fighter's pilot, the arrangement created a blind spot to the rear that enemy pilots were quick to exploit. They had to use any advantage possible – the TIE/D defender was lethal.



The Best Defence...

The whole purpose of the TIE/D defender project was to produce a single fighter capable of exceeding the mission capability of a TIE/ln flight group (four fighters). The defender was fitted with two Novaldex deflector shield generators, and its hull and wings were the strongest of any Imperial fighter at that time.

...Is A Crushing Offense

The TIE/D also had a Class 2.0 SFS ND9 hyperdrive, and SFS P-sz9.7 twin ion engines for sublight propulsion that gave it a maximum acceleration of 4220 G, faster than any other Imperial starfighter of its time, and a good match for the fastest Rebel Alliance fighters.

With manoeuvring jets on each of the three wings, the TIE/D was 40 per cent faster and hugely more agile than the standard Imperial TIE fighter. This allowed the defender to bring its terrifying array of weapons to bear with blistering speed. Four L-s9.3 laser cannons were mounted on the lower wings, and the upper wing carried two NK-3 ion cannons. All of these could be fired together, crushing shields and obliterating enemy starfighters. Under the cockpit, two M-g-2 general purpose launchers could carry proton torpedoes or concussion missiles with warheads configured to individual mission requirements. Lastly, the defender could mount the tractor beam projector designed for the TIE/ad avenger. Taken as a package, the TIE/D defender was almost unstoppable.

THE DEFENDER ATTACKS!

THE TIE/D IN ACTION

The first use of TIE/D defenders – admittedly only some of the early prototypes of the fighter – was at the Battle of Hoth. The result was a near-disaster, fortunately eclipsed by the Empire's successes on the day. Ultimately, the defender would excel (somewhat ironically) against its own kind.

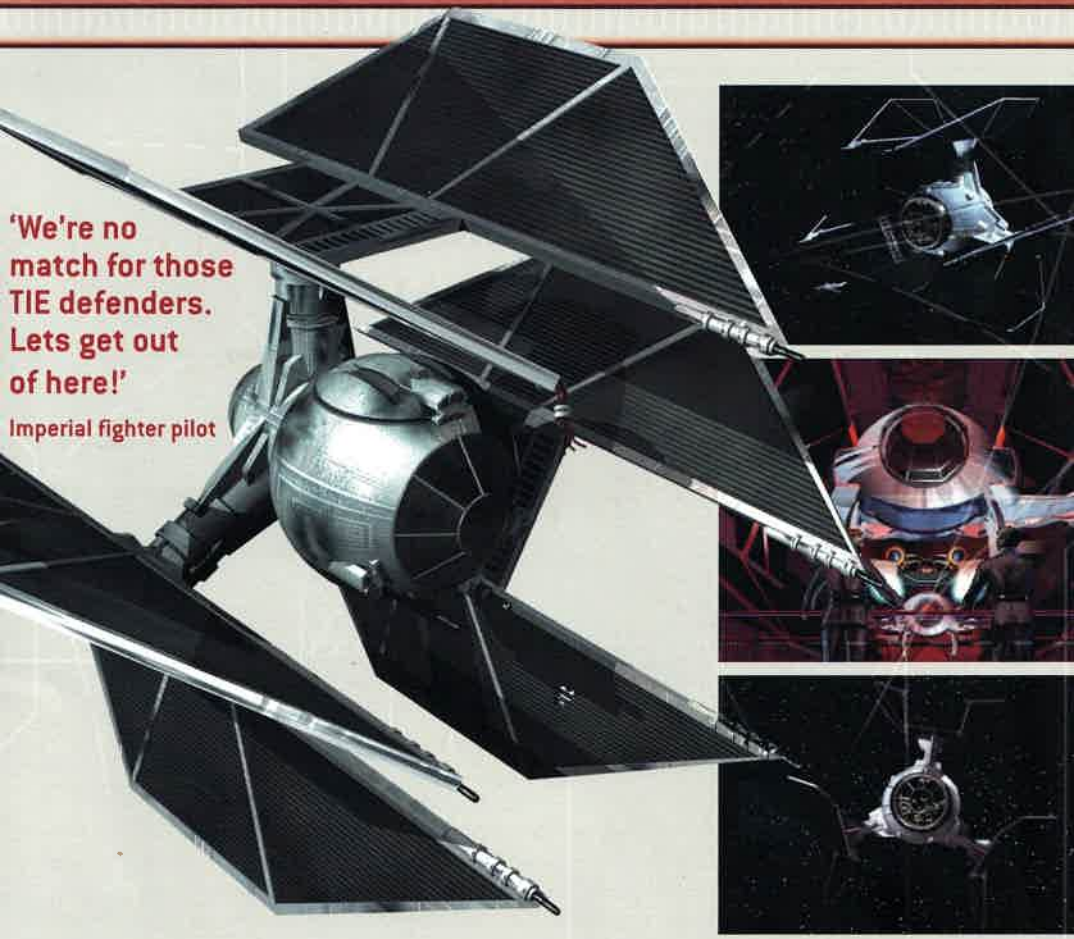
As the Rebel Alliance struggled to hold back the massive Imperial assault on Hoth, a small group of Rebel fighters dubbed Renegade Squadron wreaked their own kind of havoc on two *Victory-II* Star Destroyers as they sought to escape the blockade. Recognising the threat, the Imperials chose to use the opportunity to test a clutch of TIE advanced x7 prototypes. The fighters were fresh from Sienar Advanced Research's facility on Corulag, but were lacking many critical systems. Bereft of the proper ion engines, these prototypes were slower and less well armed than true TIE/D defenders. Renegade Squadron destroyed six of the prototypes, though the data gathered by Sienar technicians was still useful. The audacious theft of one of the prototypes from a Star Destroyer was dismissed as largely irrelevant, due to it being from so early in the craft's development.

Perfect Design

The TIE/D defender project was finally completed shortly before the Battle of Endor, with Grand Admiral Zaarin delivering a starfighter that was superior to anything in the Imperial or Rebel Alliance fleets. Its hyperdrive made it an excellent reconnaissance vessel. Its speed made the defender the perfect interceptor. Its agility made it the ideal ship for dogfights with other starfighters. A flight of defenders fitted with proton torpedoes was sufficiently powerful to give even capital ships and space stations cause for concern. In short, it was the perfect starfighter for the Empire's fight against the Rebel Alliance.

Navy Resistance

When the defender was ready for field testing and deployment it met with a distinctly cool reception. Only a very few squadrons were created, and those used only elite pilots. The Imperial Navy hierarchy, who had been surprised by the sudden introduction of a starfighter developed in a programme that none of them had been aware of,



'We're no match for those TIE defenders. Lets get out of here!'

Imperial fighter pilot

cited the monstrously high cost of the individual fighters. This ignored the fact that the rising cost in ships, pilots and other resources lost to the Alliance tactics was a huge motivational factor in the initiation of the defender programme. The resistance the defender encountered had much more to do with the fact that deploying the defender, and adopting the new tactics it called for, would be an admission that previous tactics had failed – that the Imperial Navy's hierarchy had failed. Additionally, Grand Admiral Zaarin had put a few noses out of joint, and his colleagues believed Zaarin had quite enough power and prestige.

Power Play

This concern was borne out when Zaarin made a play for control of the Empire, going so far as to kidnap Emperor Palpatine. Ironically, it was one of the defender project's test pilots, Maarek Stele, flying a TIE defender, who rescued the Emperor. Stele and the defenders he flew were instrumental in eventually stopping and killing Zaarin. Zaarin's conduct became another nail in the coffin of the TIE defender. A few of them were fielded at the Battle of Endor and saw limited service with the Imperial Remnant. Veteran New Republic pilots knew well how lucky they were never to face large numbers of the Empire's best starfighter.

GRAND ADMIRAL DEMETRIUS ZAARIN

PRIDE BEFORE A FALL

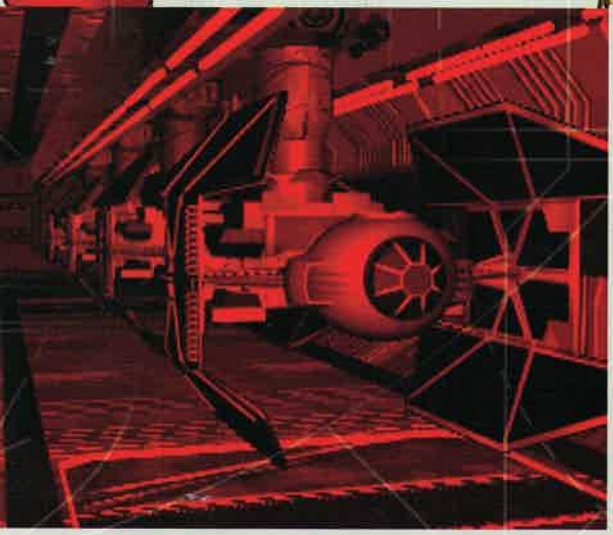
Unlike many of his peers, Demetrius Zaarin was a man of considerable ability. As well as having a strong grasp of tactics, he was a brilliant starship designer. Zaarin headed the Imperial Navy's starfighter research and development programmes and held the highest rank the Navy had to offer – but that wasn't enough for him.

Grand Admiral Zaarin was, at least outwardly, seemingly at peace with his lot in life. Though a Grand Admiral, he rarely wore the pristine white uniform his rank allowed. Instead, he insisted on 'just' being addressed as 'Admiral Zaarin' and wore the regular grey Imperial admiral's uniform. His position in the hierarchy gave Zaarin great power. This he wielded lightly, using it only to guarantee the resources necessary for the success of his starfighter projects. Zaarin did not go out of his way to curry favour at the Imperial Court, nor to play its power games. The respect shown him by the Emperor and by Darth Vader was enough, however, to gain Zaarin the ire of his fellow Grand Admirals and of many in the lower ranks of the Navy hierarchy.

Cloaking Device

Zaarin's clear and demonstrable abilities as a tactician, designer and leader were what really irked others in the Imperial Navy. Zaarin was aware of or worked on projects that only he, his hugely loyal staff, Darth Vader and the Emperor were ever fully aware of. One example was the Vorknkx Project, named after the Corellian corvette that carried the technology the project was developing. With no more stygium crystals being mined on Aeten II, Zaarin's task was to find alternative cloaking devices. A similar project was being worked on by Grand Admiral Batch, who was creating cloaked TIE fighters. Advances that Batch's teams were making were to force Zaarin's hand, bringing his plans for galactic domination forward.

Demetrius Zaarin rarely sought allies at the Imperial Court, though he later found one in Emperor's Hand Arden Lyn.



PROFILE

Grand Admiral Demetrius Zaarin

Homeworld
Coruscant

Species
Human

Height
1.81m

Weapons
None

Starship
Imperial Star Destroyer *Glory*

Affiliation
Galactic Empire, Himself

Advancing TIE Fighters

Zaarin had been fully aware of, and had contributed to, the TIE advanced x7 project that Sienar Fleet Systems had begun. However, after the Battle of Hoth, Zaarin fully took over development of the project. The Emperor had tasked Zaarin with advancing the development of the TIE fighter series, so Zaarin transferred all such projects to his facility in the Outer Rim Territories. The modified XQ6 Platform *Research*, in the Parmel System, became home to the development of the TIE avenger and TIE defender programmes. The avenger was an offshoot of the development of Darth Vader's own TIE advanced x1. Zaarin himself saw the avenger as only a step along the development track, and not an end in itself. He pushed on with the TIE defender, while the avenger saw only limited use.

Habeen Hyperdrive

Key to the advancement of the TIE avenger and defender projects was the development of a mass-produced miniaturised hyperdrive. While this had been a stumbling block for Zaarin's team, he was able to secure the technology from the Habeen through diplomacy and by defeating the Habeen's rivals, the Nharwaak. At the same time,

Maarek Stele

Having impressed Zaarin during his dealings with the Habeen, Maarek Stele found himself stationed on *Research* ahead of the transfer of the TIE defender prototypes to Coruscant. Stele was instrumental in driving off the forces of the Rebel Alliance during the transfer. However, he was less than impressed by Zaarin's later conversations, all of which seemed to probe the depth of his loyalty to the Emperor. While Stele continued to work with Zaarin, including helping the Grand Admiral secure magnetic pulse torpedo and tractor beam technology for the TIE avenger, Zaarin made no further attempt to recruit Stele to his cause. Later, Stele worked with Grand Admiral Thrawn to bring down Zaarin.

'I have studied Zaarin's ways closely. He will not resist the bait that I have laid out for him. Soon, he too will meet his end.' **Grand Admiral Thrawn to the Emperor**

Admiral Zaarin was able to thwart the Rebel Alliance's attempts to obtain the new hyperdrive technology through its dealings with the Nharwaak. The whole affair was a triumph for Zaarin and the Empire. During demonstrations of the TIE avenger to Darth Vader at *Research*, Zaarin let it be known that he was already working on the next TIE starfighter. As Vader had suggested at that demonstration, the Emperor requested prototypes of the new starfighter be sent to Coruscant for him to view.

Traitor of the Empire

Concerned that the cloaking technology being developed by Grand Admiral Batch would soon give the Emperor a key advantage over his own forces, Zaarin took advantage of Darth Vader's troubles in dealing with the forces of the traitorous (and now deceased) Admiral Harkov to launch his long-planned coup attempt.

Zaarin's agent in the Imperial Court was the Emperor's Hand Arden Lyn. She was able to subdue Palpatine sufficiently for Zaarin's loyal troops to kidnap the Emperor and transfer him to a shuttle for transport to Zaarin's flagship, the Star Destroyer *Glory*. Darth Vader and Maarek Stele arrived in TIE defenders just in time, with Stele disabling the shuttle carrying Palpatine. The Emperor was rescued, and Zaarin's plot defeated. Then Vice Admiral Thrawn, who had played a part in the defeat of Zaarin's forces at Coruscant, was promoted and tasked with bringing the traitorous Grand Admiral down. Though Zaarin crippled the Empire's TIE avenger programme, he failed to do the same with the defender. Grand Admiral Thrawn tempted Zaarin into a pitched battle to gain the cloaking technology onboard the Corellian corvette *Vorknkx*, which Zaarin was allowed to steal. When the *Vorknkx* exploded on attempting to flee, thanks to a design liability that Thrawn had concealed from his foe, Zaarin was killed.

THE TIE/AD AVENGER

ADVANCED SUCCESSOR

Sienar Fleet Systems, working with both Darth Vader and Grand Admiral Demetrius Zaarin, sought to build a new breed of TIE fighter. The initial concepts led to the development of Vader's own starfighter, but Zaarin took the evolution further.

After the Empire's victory at the Battle of Hoth, Zaarin was given complete and direct control of the TIE advanced programme. The result was the TIE/ad starfighter, which its test pilots dubbed the TIE avenger.

Vader's Influence

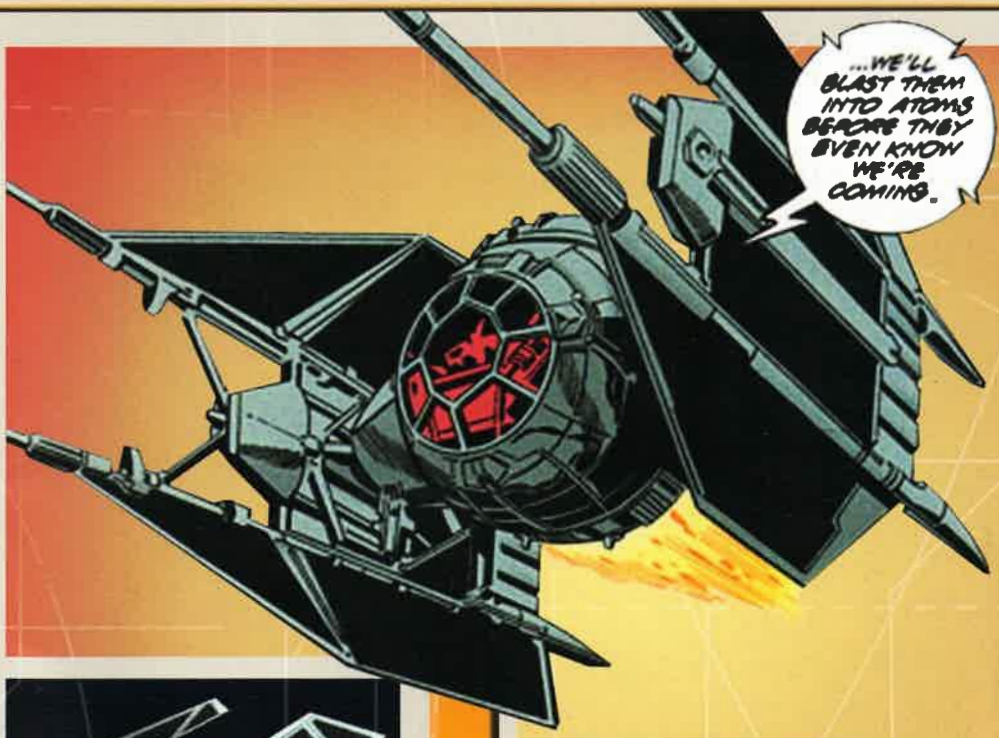
The avenger carried over the wide, flattened rear fuselage that Darth Vader's advanced x1 had. It also had similar 'bent' wings, though it copied the sharp pointed profile of the TIE Interceptor's wings to front and rear. The avenger also had the same laser cannons as the Interceptor – four wing-mounted SFS L-s9.3 cannon. Two SFS M-g-2 general purpose warhead launchers were fitted, each with a magazine of four missiles. These could be mission-tailored, with concussion missiles, proton torpedoes, heavy rockets or the proton bombs usually carried by TIE bombers.

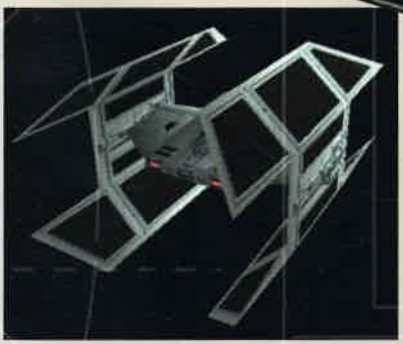
Beam Work

Zaarin and his team designed a tractor beam weapon for the TIE avenger. Though the limitations were significant – it had limited range and could only be used in short bursts before needing to recharge – it allowed avenger pilots to lock onto an enemy and hold them in their firing arc. At that range, missile hits were virtually guaranteed if the lasers weren't enough to destroy the enemy.

Ideal Interceptor

The TIE advanced project was established to deal with the significant threat posed by the Rebel Alliance's 'hit and fade' starfighter tactics. The TIE avenger was faster than the A-wing and more manoeuvrable than the TIE Interceptor. The brand new SFS P-sx7.4 twin ion engines made the avenger the fastest TIE fighter at the time, while the SFS I-s3a solar ionisation reactor provided power for all the ship's systems. This included the Novaldex deflector shields, a clear statement that the TIE avenger was not part of the generation of TIE fighters, which emphasised the tactics of quantity over quality.





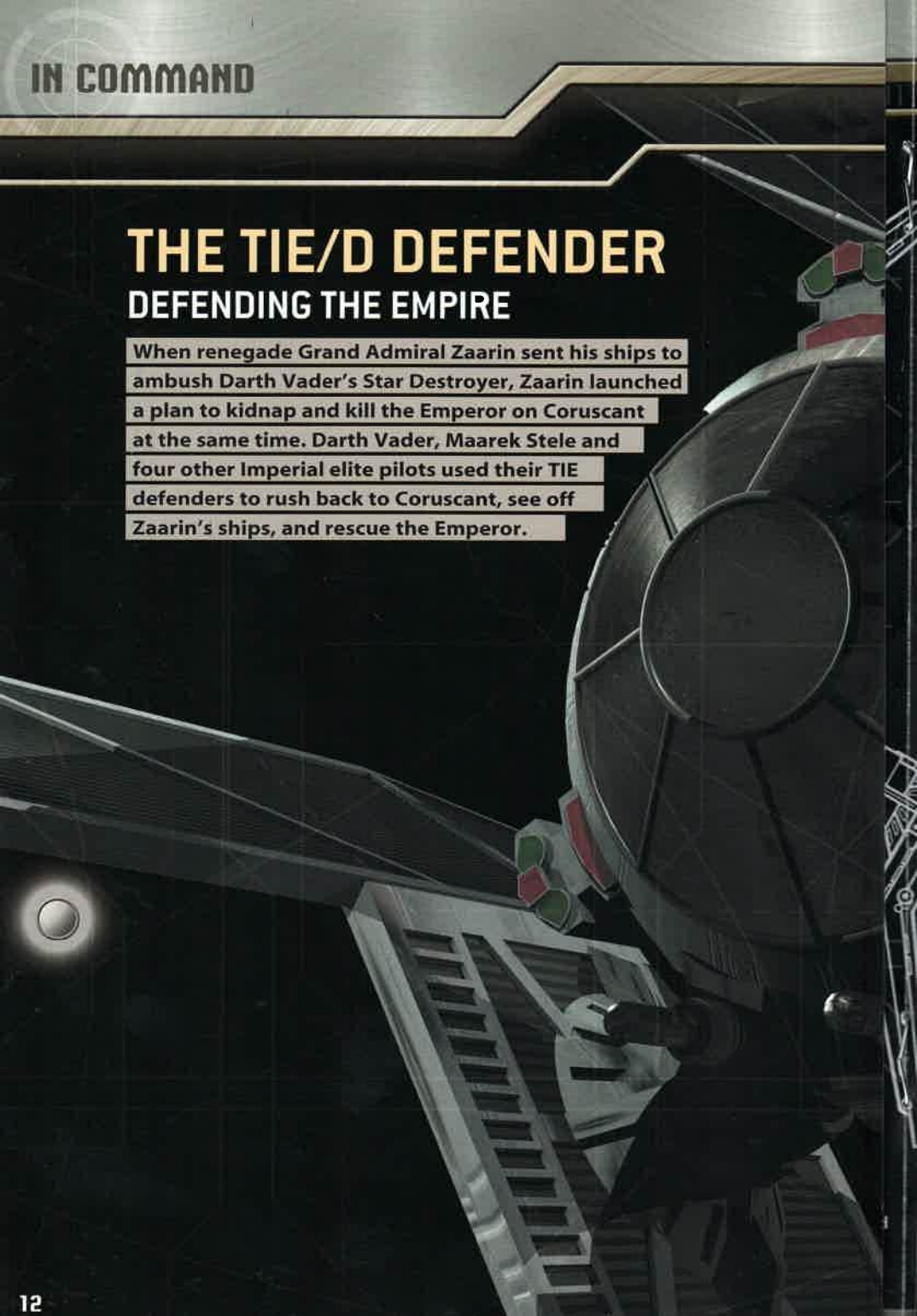
TIE/ad avenger PROFILE

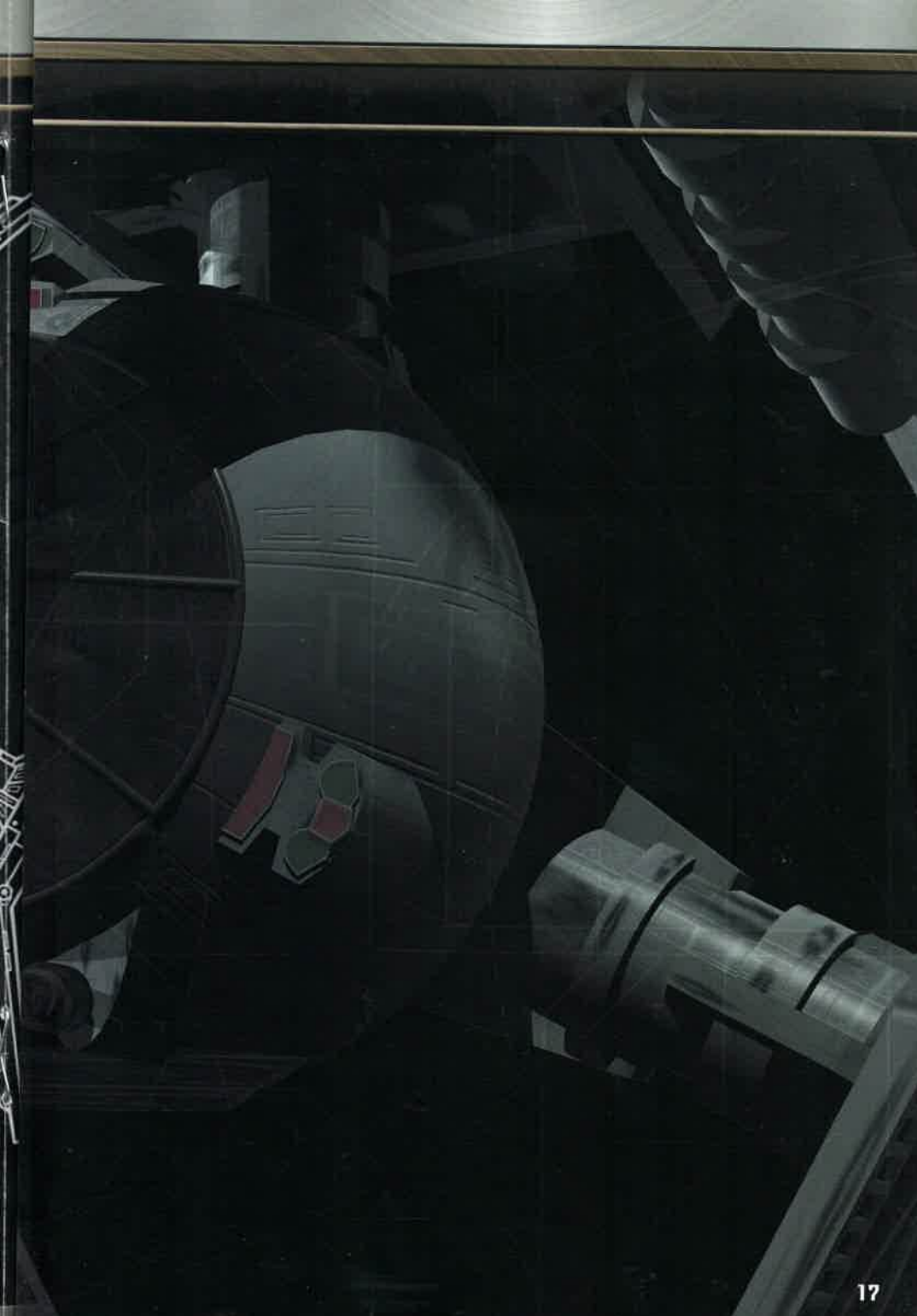
Type
TIE series space superiority starfighter
Designer
Zaarin's Research facility team
Manufacturer
Sienar Fleet Systems
Length
9.8m
Weapons
4x SFS L-s9.3 laser cannons,
2x SFS M-g-2 warhead launchers,
1x tractor beam projector
Crew
1x pilot
Affiliation
Galactic Empire,
Grand Admiral Zaarin

THE TIE/D DEFENDER

DEFENDING THE EMPIRE

When renegade Grand Admiral Zaarin sent his ships to ambush Darth Vader's Star Destroyer, Zaarin launched a plan to kidnap and kill the Emperor on Coruscant at the same time. Darth Vader, Maarek Stele and four other Imperial elite pilots used their TIE defenders to rush back to Coruscant, see off Zaarin's ships, and rescue the Emperor.





TIE/D DEFENDER

Type
TIE series multi-role starfighter

Designer
Sienar Fleet Systems and Grand Admiral Zaarin's research facility team

Manufacturer
Sienar Fleet Systems

Length
9.2 metres

Max. Acceleration
4220 G (space)

Max. Speed
1680 km/h (atmosphere)

Power
Sienar Fleet Systems I-s4d solar ionisation reactor

Engines
SFS P-sz9.7 twin ion engines

Hull
Reinforced titanium hull, Quadanium steel solar panel wings

Shields
2x Novaldex deflector shield generators

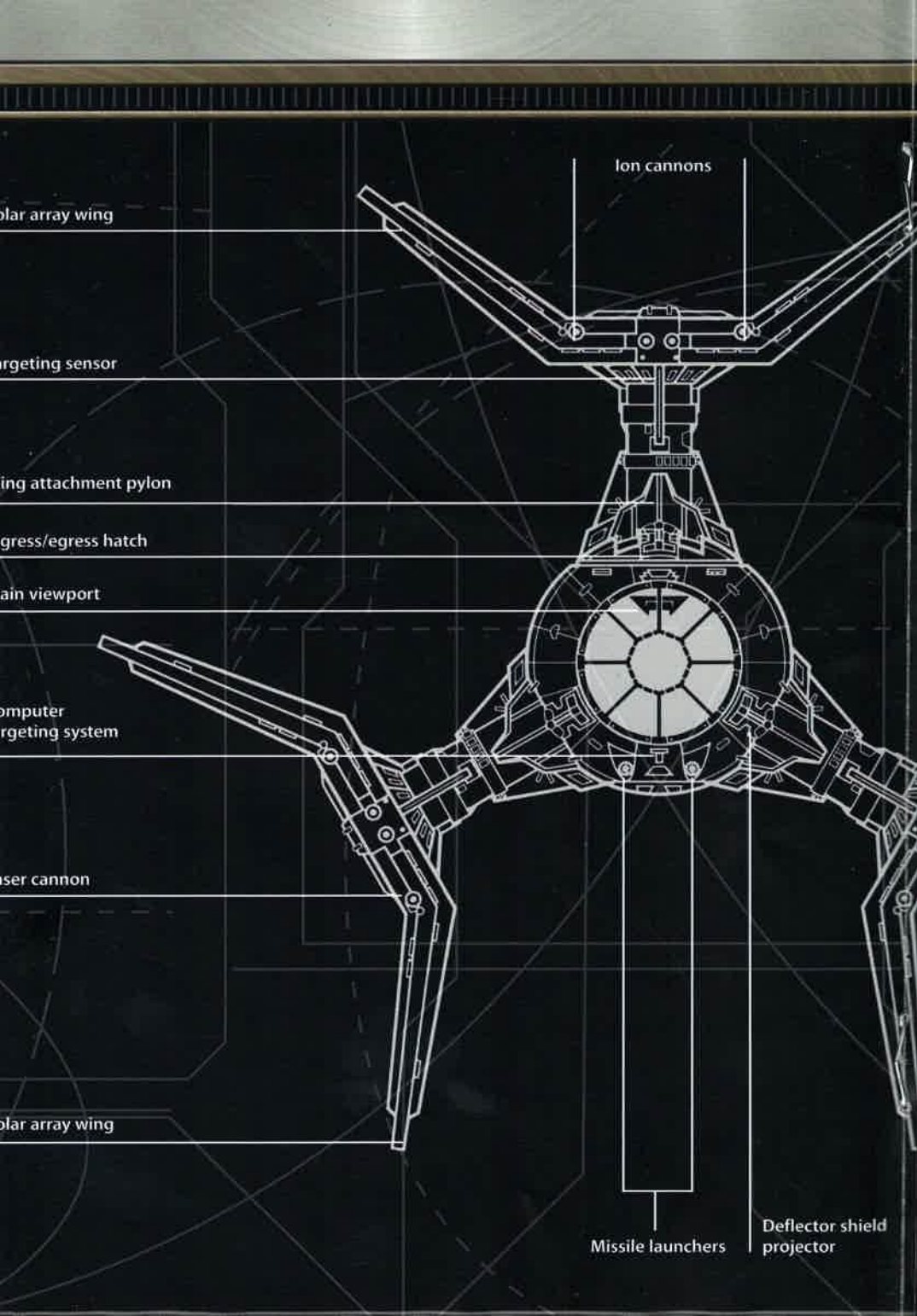
NavComp
SFS N-s6 Navcon

Flight Systems
SFS F-s5x flight avionics

Weapons
4x SFS L-s9.3 laser cannons, 2x Borstel NK-3 medium ion cannons, 2x SFS M-g-2 warhead launcher with magazine of 4x missiles/ torpedoes, 1x tractor beam projector

Crew
1x pilot

Affiliation
Galactic Empire, Zaarin, Imperial Remnant


Ion cannons
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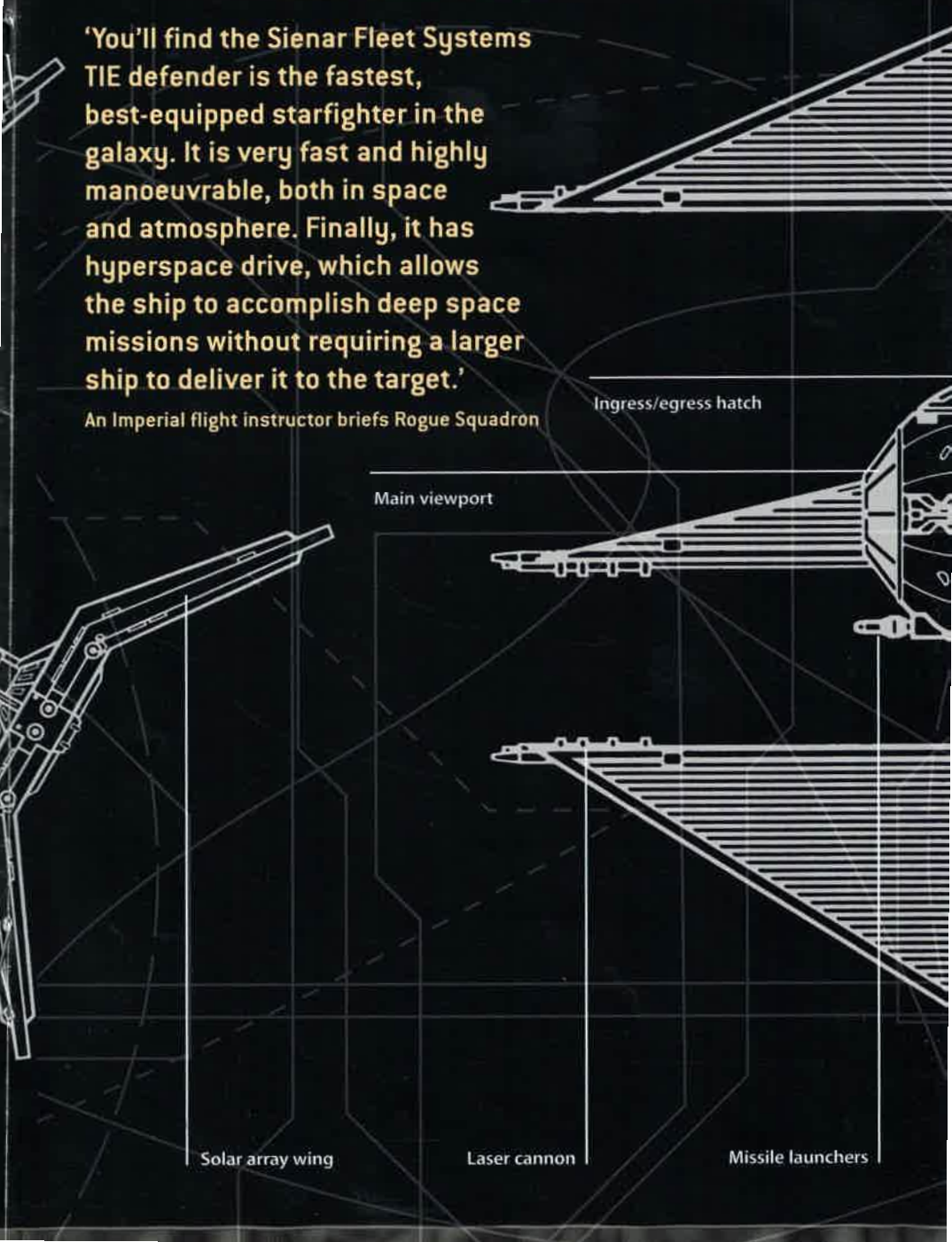
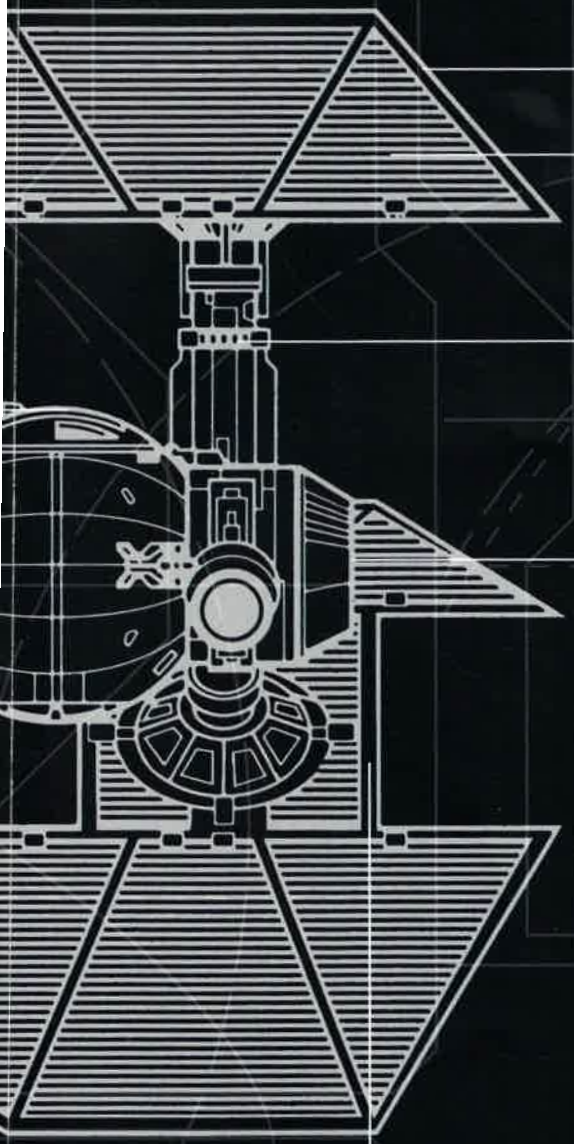
ser cannon
olar array wing
Missile launchers
Deflector shield projector

'You'll find the Sienar Fleet Systems TIE defender is the fastest, best-equipped starfighter in the galaxy. It is very fast and highly manoeuvrable, both in space and atmosphere. Finally, it has hyperspace drive, which allows the ship to accomplish deep space missions without requiring a larger ship to deliver it to the target.'

An Imperial flight instructor briefs Rogue Squadron





Rogue Defenders

After the Battle of Endor, when a small number of TIE defenders flew as part of Onyx Squadron, the Imperial Remnant occasionally fielded the elite fighter craft. When the New Republic's Rogue Squadron briefly allied with former foe Ysanne Isard, she allowed them use of a squadron of her TIE defenders to successfully infiltrate the operations of Prince Admiral Krennel. The Rogues used the fighters to great effect, defeating Krennel and a clone of Isard.

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AUTOMADON

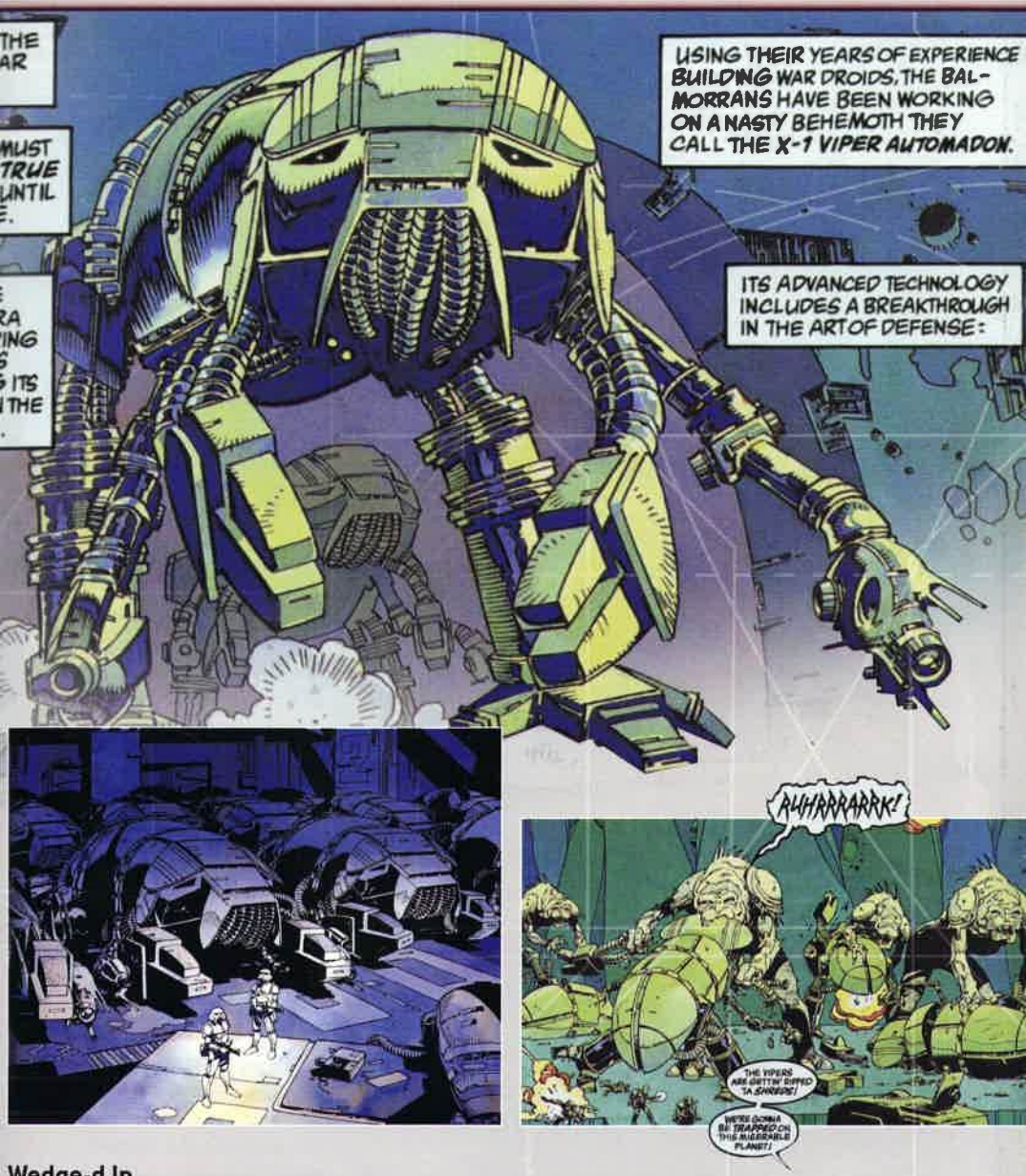
THE X-1 VIPER

Balmorran Arms was one of the foremost battle droid manufacturers in the galaxy. During the Clone Wars, the Separatists took control of the company. Afterwards, the Empire took over. The company directors longed for freedom, and they won it, thanks to their own creations – including the X-1 Viper.

After the Battle of Endor, the New Republic freed Balmorra and Balmorran Arms. For a little over five glorious years, the company was able to operate independently, before the reborn Emperor forced the manufacture of AT-STs and other Imperial weapons again. When Palpatine died once more, Balmorran Arms rose up against the Empire and took back its freedom. It was not long before the Empire came calling again, demanding Balmorra's capitulation. The company was ready this time, however, fighting the Empire's forces to a truce using advanced SD-10 battle droids and the fearsome X-10 Viper droids.

Big Beetle...

On the planet Kubindi, the Kubaz raise bantha-sized insects called sun beetles that they used as beasts of burden for centuries. The Balmorran Arms designers took the sun beetle as the basis for the look of the new battle droid. The sun beetle walked on all six legs, but the X-1 walked on the rear two. It could also 'run', something that often fatally surprised its foes. In fact, the X-1 Viper was astoundingly nimble. The huge claws on the front two arms were quick enough to snatch passing speeders. The smaller middle arms might have looked laughable, but they each bore a hugely powerful blaster cannon equivalent to a capital ship-grade turbolaser. A final nasty surprise was hidden under the 'chin' of the droid – a pair of laser cannons mounted under the main body. During the confrontation with the Empire on Balmorra, the AT-ATs, SD-9 droids and Shadow droids discovered that the X-1's molecular shielding was its greatest asset. It blocked and absorbed energy blasts, charging its own systems with the attacks. Little wonder the Empire was content to call a truce.


USING THEIR YEARS OF EXPERIENCE BUILDING WAR DROIDS, THE BALMORRANS HAVE BEEN WORKING ON A NASTY BEHEMOTH THEY CALL THE X-1 VIPER AUTOMADON.
ITS ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY INCLUDES A BREAKTHROUGH IN THE ART OF DEFENSE:

Wedge-d In

Though the Balmorrans agreed to a truce with the Empire, they allowed the New Republic to 'steal' a shipment of X-1 Viper Automadons for use in an attack on the Emperor's stronghold on Byss. Wedge Antilles, Lando Calrissian, C-3PO and a group of commandos were stuffed inside the shipment of droids and launched a surprise attack on the Imperials. Sadly, the molecular shielding proved little use against the physical attacks of Chrysalides – huge dark side creatures bred by the Emperor.

THE IMPERIAL GRAND ADMIRALS

UPPER ECHELONS

Emperor Palpatine was fond of creating jealousy and division among his own servants, ensuring they wasted their energies outdoing each other rather than seeking to oust him. Two years before the Battle of Yavin, Palpatine created a new rank in the Imperial Navy for just this purpose – the rank of Grand Admiral.

There were to be just 12 Grand Admirals, according to Emperor Palpatine's own rules. Of course, he himself was content to break those rules. He did this when he promoted the genius Chiss tactician Mitth'raw'nuruodo after his assistance in saving Palpatine from Grand Admiral Zaarin. The alien was better known to the galaxy as Grand Admiral Thrawn. Putting aside Thrawn and Zaarin, there were 11 other bearers of the title Grand Admiral, none of whom came close to Thrawn's abilities.

Grand Admiral Martio Batch

Not all Grand Admirals were political postings. Martio Batch was the head of a number of secret projects, including the quest to develop an effective cloaking device. Batch succeeded very well, only to see his project destroyed by Rebel agents. Though he fled the Empire to avoid the fatal consequences, his own crew assassinated him and defected to join a Deep Core warlord.

Grand Admiral Nial Declan

Somehow, the young Declan's Force sensitivity was missed by the Jedi Order. His extraordinary luck in combat during the Clone Wars and for the Empire as a TIE pilot brought him to Palpatine's attention. He trained Declan himself, and saw that his loyal adept was promoted regularly. Grand Admiral Declan died on the Death Star at Endor, attempting to reach the throne room after he felt the death of his Emperor through the Force.

Before the death of the Emperor, the Grand Admirals frequently found themselves at odds in efforts to curry favour with their master.

Grand Admiral Grant

Erroneously known as the last Grand Admiral, his arrogance endeared him to no-one – not even other Imperials. After the Battle of Endor saw the Empire implode into various conflicts, Grant found himself largely isolated, despite his tactical and command abilities. He defected to the New Republic, giving up secrets in return for immunity from prosecution and faded into obscurity.

Grand Admiral Josef Grunger

On the death of the Emperor at Endor, Grunger enthusiastically began to gather his own fleet, quickly dominating the Outer Rim as an Imperial warlord with a huge fleet at his command. His bullying arrogance was his downfall, as Grunger attempted to destroy Grand Admiral Pitta's forces in the Corellian System. The two destroyed each other.

Grand Admiral Ishin Il-Raz

Paranoid, passionate about the Empire and a complete dolt, Il-Raz assisted politically and administratively in the creation of the Committee for the Preservation of the New Order, or COMPNOR, which was a major force within Palpatine's Empire. A man of no military ability, he committed a number of atrocities before he lost his mind and deliberately destroyed his whole fleet in the Denarii Nova, eight months after the Battle of Endor.

Grand Admiral Afsheen Makati

A man of little imagination but great loyalty to whoever ruled the Empire from Coruscant, Makati had been reprimanded publicly and severely by Kadann, the Force-wielding head of a secret Imperial sect. Makati's hatred of Kadann consumed his life thereafter. Escaping the Death Star at Endor just in time, he died many months later thinking he'd killed Kadann. Sadly, it was an imposter.

After the Battle of Endor, many of the Grand Admirals sought power for themselves, becoming warlords in command of their own fleets.

Grand Admiral Danetta Pitta

A small part alien himself, Danetta Pitta was a vicious 'alien hater' and a frothingly passionate supporter of the Imperial myth of High Human Culture. Horribly wealthy, Pitta bribed his way into the position of 'protector' of the Corellian Sector after the Battle of Endor. There, in command of his torpedo sphere, he was killed along with Grand Admiral Grunger when the latter rammed the sphere rather than surrender.

Grand Admiral Peccati Syn

A religious fanactic, Syn really did worship the New Order, seeing his pursuit of the Rebel Alliance as a holy quest. After Endor, the tottering Syn threw his lot in with Sate Pestage's cult, the Church of the Dark Side. Manipulated by Pestage, he was a pitifully loyal subject, dying at Kashyyyk while battling a far superior force commanded by Admiral Ackbar.

Grand Admiral Miltin Takel

Lecherous, gossiping, vicious, debauched and a spice addict – Takel was not a nice person. His tactical insight came from the Force-like prescience that glitterstim use can bring, and it also allowed him enough warning to escape the Death Star at Endor. He did badly in the subsequent scramble for power, falling foul of Ysanne Isard and Grand Admiral Grunger. Takel ended up serving Trioculus, the pretender-Emperor, and was killed by him for questioning orders.

Grand Admiral Osvald Teshik

Given the task of maintaining the security of the Core Worlds, Teshik failed the Emperor and was sent unknowingly on a suicide mission. Horribly injured, he survived as a cyborg. Almost dying on the second Death Star, he commanded the rearguard action after the Imperial retreat was ordered. After three hours, Teshik was captured. He was later executed by the New Republic for the terrible things he'd done during his time 'protecting' the Core Worlds.

Grand Admiral Rufaan Tigellinus

Charismatic and viciously smart, Tigellinus could play the nasty games of the Imperial Court like no other. He even managed to discredit Grand Admiral Thrawn at Court so deeply that the Emperor sent Thrawn into effective exile. In the end, Tigellinus was betrayed and out-played by Moff Disra, who took over the Grand Admiral's assets once Tigellinus was killed some time after the Battle of Endor.

From Where...?

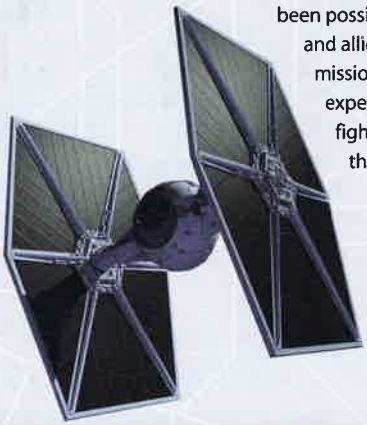
The Grand Admirals owe their origin to Timothy Zahn, who originated the concept in the 1991 novel *Heir to the Empire*. Then, only two Grand Admirals were named – Thrawn and Makati. Batch, Grant, Il-Raz, Pitta, and Syn came from *The Essential Chronology*, Declann from an article in the *Star Wars Insider*, Grunger from the novel *The Glove of Darth Vader*, while Takel, Teshik and Tigellinus came from the West End Games role-playing game.

STAR WARS: TIE FIGHTER

THE VIEW FROM THE OTHER SIDE

In February 1993, LucasArts released Star Wars: X-Wing, its first *Star Wars* computer game for the PC, on floppy disk no less (ask your grandfather). The game was a huge success, offering players the chance to fly X-wings, Y-wings, A-wings and, thanks to an expansion set, the B-wing. Critically acclaimed, the follow-up was eagerly awaited.

July 1994 saw the release of Star Wars: TIE fighter, and LucasArts showed that X-Wing had not been a fluke. The graphics engine had been improved, so much so that Star Wars: X-Wing was rereleased as a CD-ROM collection with updated graphics that same year. TIE Fighter, the first and (so far) only Star Wars game to allow players to see things entirely from the Imperial perspective, was a considerable advance on X-Wing despite only a year having passed. Along with better rendering giving more realism (in 1990s' style), the engine allowed far more starships and space stations to appear in missions than had been possible before. The AI of opponents and allies, and the scripting of the missions made for a complex, believable experience. What made Star Wars: TIE fighter really special was the depth of that experience.



Stele's Progress

The limited edition version of Star Wars: X-Wing included a novella called *The Farlander Papers*, and TIE fighter came with a short story, later expanded on, called *The Stele Chronicles*. This established that the character the player guided was called Maarek Stele. His journey from rookie to ace pilot, and experienced test pilot for exciting new starfighters, was the theme of the game. Unlike X-Wing, the story was an intricate one, and showed the complexities of trying to survive the deadly politics of the Empire. The player was briefed before missions and could talk to the briefing officer afterwards for additional details. However, as the game progressed, Stele's abilities came to the attention of the Secret Order of the Empire. A shadowy figure would give the player optional extra tasks for many of their missions. Completing those meant that, as well as moving up through the ranks of the Imperial Navy, the player also attained ranks within the Secret Order.

Ship It!

To do all this, as well as to combat the Rebel menace, foil traitorous Imperial Grand Admirals, and even rescue the Emperor, players had access to an incredible array of ships – TIE fighters, interceptors, bombers, gunboats, missile boats, and the TIE avenger and defender. Many of these, along with the story and characters, would become enshrined as part of the Expanded Universe.

Ever Expanding

Star Wars: TIE fighter was expanded on and upgraded much as its predecessor had been. The campaign 'defender of the Empire' continued the story with Zaarin's betrayal, while the Collector's CD-ROM version of the game, released in 1995, finished the story with Thrawn hunting down the traitor. Both X-wing and TIE fighter were updated in 1998 and 1999, being upgraded with the graphics engine from 1997's Star Wars: X-Wing vs. TIE fighter.

REALISING THE CONCEPT

ILLUSTRATING THE TIE DEFENDER

TIE DESIGN

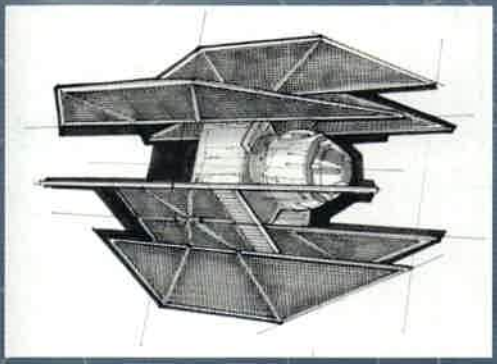
1 The TIE defender first flew in the final campaign of the original *Star Wars: TIE fighter* PC game, where it was realised as a computer graphic.

2 In the campaign, called "Treachery at Ottega", Grand Admiral Zaarin attempts to take over the Empire. The player rescues Palpatine over Coruscant.

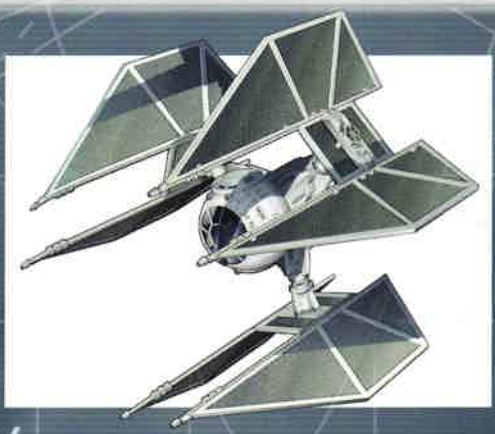
5 The popular Decipher, Inc. *Star Wars* CCG released three photo-realistic pictures of the TIE/D defender for the July 2000 expansion *Death Star II*.

6 The *Official Star Wars Fact File* covered the TIE/D defender in Issue 73 of the long-running publication, complete with a new CGI illustration.

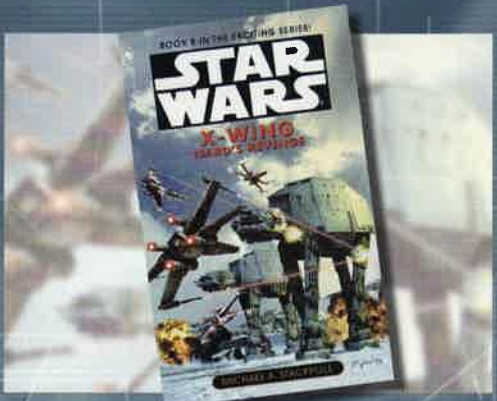
From its first appearance in 1994's *Star Wars: TIE fighter*, the TIE/D defender has been a fan favourite, as much because it was hugely powerful in the game as because of the story that surrounded it. Since 1994, the TIE defender has appeared elsewhere in the Expanded Universe and on collectors' shelves.



3 The defender was later detailed in *The Essential Guide to Vehicles and Vessels* (1996). It was given schematics and a 'production sketch' illustration.



4 The TIE/D defender was listed again, along with a full-colour illustration, in *The New Essential Guide to Vehicles and Vessels* released in 2003.



7 Rogue Squadron got its chance to fly the defender in the eigth book of Michael A. Stackpole's *Star Wars: X-Wing* series, *Isard's Revenge*.

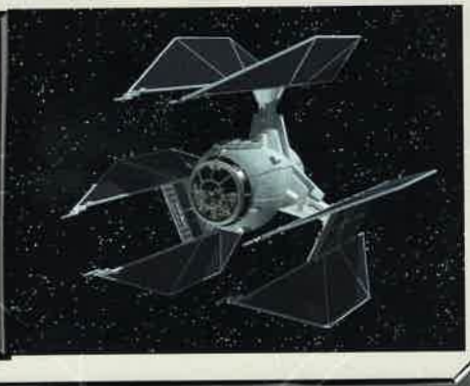
8 The TIE/D defender has appeared as a model in the Action Fleet series (2003) and as a LEGO kit (in 2010).

DID YOU KNOW?

1 What was the name of the booklet that came with ***Star Wars: TIE Fighter*** that gave the early history of Maarek Stele?

2 What starship did Grand Admiral Thrawn develop to counter the TIE/D defender?

3 What was the name of the flight group of defenders led by Darth Vader to Coruscant to save the Emperor?



ANSWERS:

1. The booklet was called *The Thrawn Chronicles*.

2. Grand Admiral Thrawn developed the Missile Boat. It was so powerful that the Emperor himself demanded that it be withdrawn from service, though doubt concerned after all the trouble caused when the TIE hanger fell into the wrong hands.

3. Darth Vader led Delta flight, flying the TIE/D defender designated Delta 4.

ELOM – FONDOR

Elom
Region: Outer Rim Territories
System: Elom System

The planet was home to two sentient species: the surface-dwelling Elom and the subterranean Elomin. When large deposits of lommite ore were found, the two species encountered each other for the first time. The Elomin helped many Elom escape slavery in the Empire's mines.

Eriadu
Region: Outer Rim Territories
System: Eriadu System

Reaping the profits from being a crossroads for a number of vital hyperspace trade routes, Eriadu was massively polluted. Somewhat pitifully, those who governed the world sought to emulate Coruscant's planetary city-sprawl. Pro-Imperial, it was home to the influential Tarkin family.

Falleen
Region: Outer Rim Territories
System: Falleen System

Home to the reptilian Falleen people, the planet was part of the CIS in the Clone Wars. It was then dominated by the Empire. The capital city was destroyed on Vader's orders when a bacteriological agent escaped, starting Falleen Prince Xizor's campaign to bring Vader down.

Felucia
Region: Mid Rim Territories
System: Felucia System

Covered in plants and fungi, Felucia was the source of the valuable healing herb nysillim. Populated by both the diminutive Felucians and the larger, more mysterious Jungle Felucians, it was the site of several battles during the Clone Wars. Felucia was later colonised by displaced Ithorians.

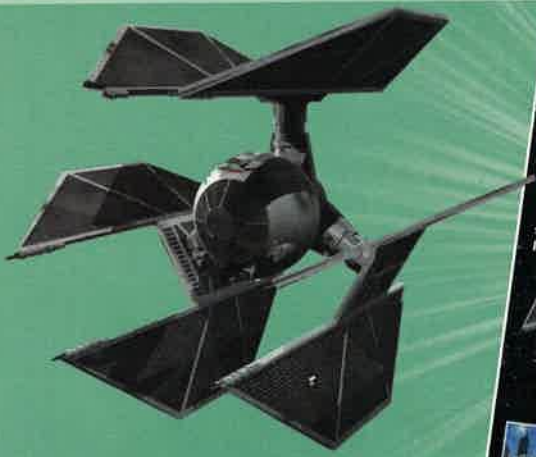
Fondor
Region: Colonies
System: Fondor System

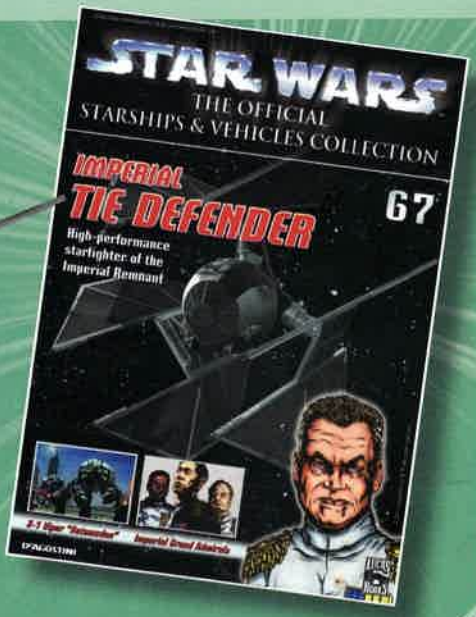
Part of the Tapani sector, Fondor was home to the Fondor Shipyards. Part of the Techno Union, the planet owed its allegiance to the CIS during the Clone Wars, despite most of the population being anti-Separatist. The Empire built many ships there, including the Star Dreadnought *Executor*.

Forest Moon of Endor
Region: Outer Rim Territories
System: Endor System

The Forest moon (also called the Sanctuary Moon) orbited the gas giant of Endor. A nature reserve, under the Old Republic, it was home to native Ewoks and the many species, groups and individuals who crashed-landed there. It was home to the Jedi during the Second Galactic Civil War.

IN THIS ISSUE





WITH ISSUE 67: TIE DEFENDER

Model unavailable for photography at time of going to print.

IN YOUR NEXT ISSUE

WITH ISSUE 68: TRADE FEDERATION LANDING SHIP

Model unavailable for photography at time of going to print.

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